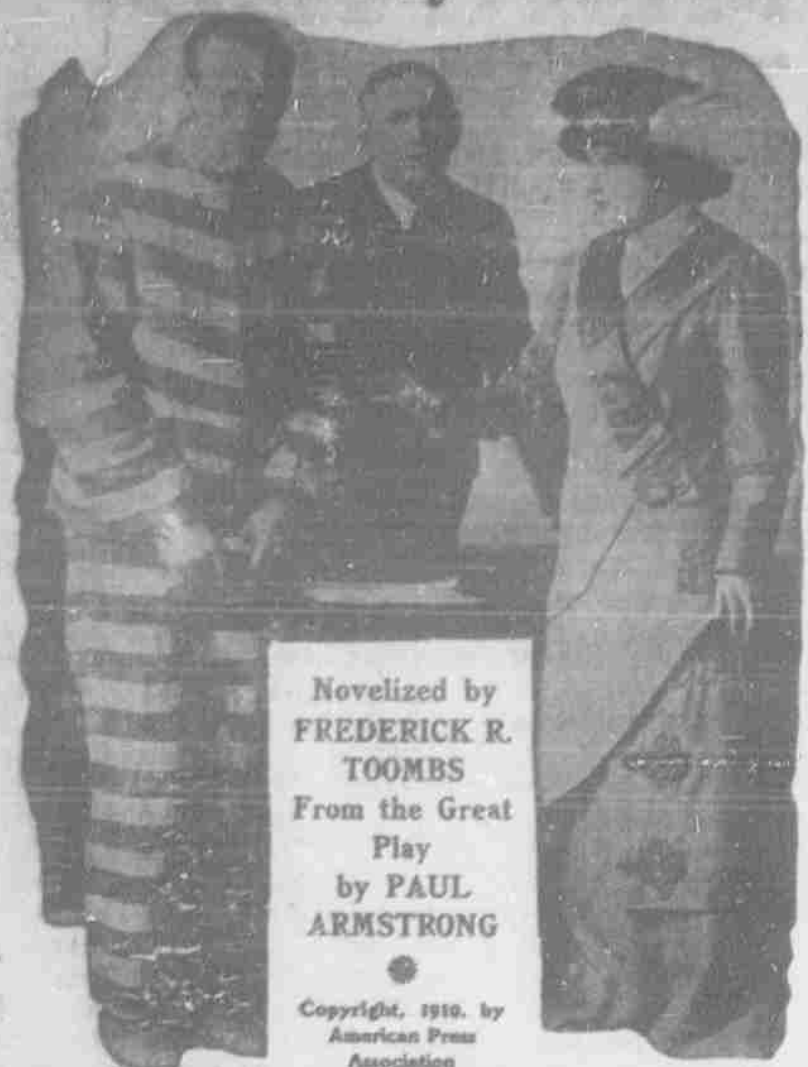


"Alias Jimmy Valentine"



Novelized by
FREDERICK R.
TOOMBS
From the Great
Play
by PAUL
ARMSTRONG

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JIMMY VALENTINE, WARDEN HANDLER AND ROSE LANE.

"Ah!" Then I've got a lot of things," laughed Handler sarcastically. "Well, to me they are human."
To Rose Lane the adventure was extremely interesting. Finally succeeding in getting her uncle's consent to her accompanying him on a visit to the great prison, she was now seeing a little section of the darker side of life which appealed strongly to her imaginative nature. Her cheeks flushed with the excitement of the operation, she exclaimed:
"Did he take your jewels?" asked Mrs. Moore sympathetically.
"No, I was in the parlor car in daylight. I was the only person in the car, and this man walked up and accosted me. I reached for the bell for the porter. He struck my wrist. Then he sat on the arm of my chair. He wanted to talk to me, he said. I scarcely knew what to do when a younger man, evidently a gentleman, walked in from the smoking compartment and, taking the man by the arm, led him away."
"How do you know the man was a burglar?" asked the lieutenant governor.
"Listen. I had no more than got my breath when the man came back. He

Odd, but we heard he was killed trying to get on a moving train. And by the way, his particular pal is now in this prison doing ten-safe breaking. His name is Valentine. The 'try you tell is a brand new one on us."
"And you never saw again the gentleman who rescued you?" queried Mrs. Moore of Miss Lane.

"Never." Into the young girl's face came an expression of mingled sweetness and regret. The woman's question seemed to revive in her the memories of a voice and face and a manner and a personality which somehow she had never been quite able to forget.

"We sat and talked for a few minutes," she finally went on. "He told me that there were reasons why he could not let me know who he was and that he could never see me again, though I wanted him to meet my family to receive their thanks for what he had done. He was very nervous, but he had amazing strength for one of his build, as his handling of that ruffian showed. When he shook hands with me I noticed that his hands were very white and smooth and sensitive."

The warden was now leaning over his desk, intent on the girl's words. "I noticed that he had the habit of frequently pressing one hand nervously into the other, and—"

"He was tall, and he had blond hair," interjected the warden.
The girl gazed at Handler in open mouthed astonishment.

CHAPTER III.

WARDEN HANDLER, regretting that he had given his visitors an indication that he believed he had recognized Rose Lane's deliverer, answered the questions of the girl and the lieutenant governor by stating: "The man is as bad as the burglar he threw out of the car window—even worse. He's in this prison at this moment, I firmly believe, according to the description we've just heard."

"Oh, impossible!" exclaimed Miss Lane, her face coloring. "He was a gentleman, a thorough gentleman, and too young to be a hardened criminal." Her face became shadowed with concern.

The warden was vastly amused at this remark, which the young girl rendered with the finality of unquestioned authority.

"Too young?" he laughed. "Age is no barrier in crime the way you see. I'll take a chance at anything you see, they're ambitious. They're anxious to rise in their business."

The warden paused and glanced from the girl to the observing lieutenant governor, then to the two members of the Gate of Hope. He commented on the fact that his visitors had disagreed with him on various points and informed them that he had determined to offer them a few object lessons, lessons with living models. "I'll show you," he said, "that these crooks we've got here will ply their trade at all times, whether they profit or not; that, in short, criminality is a mania with them and that there's no use in trying to better them." His first exhibit, brought in by the secretary, was the celebrated forger "Blinky" Davis. At the warden's request Lieutenant Governor Fay drew a check for \$5 and handed it to Blinky. To oblige the warden Blinky, aided by a knife and pen and ink, in five minutes had "raised" it to the amount of \$50,000. The lieutenant governor pronounced it perfect. "I know where I could pass it, too," laughed Blinky as he was led away.

"I had him on the books once, and he couldn't resist raising the prison checks," chuckled Handler. "I could

"Blinky," whose pockets were stuffed up with straps, dashed to the warden, like a sucking pig in a market window, only his toes touching the floor. Anyway No. 1288 was already discredited.

"Get Valentine!" he gruffly said to Smith. "Well, governor," he continued in a more amiable tone. "I'll give you and the ladies a romantic type. He's not a poet, but he is doing ten years here for opening a bank safe without tools or the combination, simply by sense of touch. There is some poetry in that."

"Impossible!" commented Fay. "Well, the bank safe was opened and the money stolen, and his pal poached."

The door at the right of the office leading in from the corridors of cells opened, and came Smith, followed by a young man whose convict's garb could not overshadow the intelligence that shined in his ashen face. Clearly the prison air was working its baneful penalty on him with more success than usual in the case of men who entered the institution in good health. Vaguely conscious that there were visitors present, No. 1288 stood before the warden with his eyes directed toward the floor. His shoulders were square, he was of good height, with a figure which yet bore indications that he had been athletic in his free days. When he had on him in fellows like that all day. He picked up an object from his desk. "Do you see this lock? A German inventor waiting outside has spent fourteen years in perfecting that. He claims it cannot be opened without the key. The prison board has accepted it for use here if the claims made for it are true. We have a man here paralyzed on one side, a sneak thief. I have sent for him. He may not open it, but he will try, for he cannot resist the criminal mania that controls him. Smith," to his secretary, "get the Dutchman; also the gentleman known as 'Dick the Rat.'"

When the decrepit form of "Dick the Rat" was brought in, together with the patient inventor Blickendolfsbach, he was given the lock, three minutes and a hairpin. Ten seconds before his allotted time expired he threw the lock, opened, on the warden's desk, and with his repulsive, seamy face contorted into what he considered was a smile he inclined his head to one side. From his throat came inarticulate squeals of glee—exactly the squeals of a rat.

Only the watchfulness of Smith saved the "Rat" from the violent, despairing onslaught of the German, who screamed: "I'll kill him! He ruins me! Und mit a hairpin, mein Gott!" "You're not the first man to be ruined by a hairpin," laughed the warden. "Don't tell your wife."

Smith sent the inventor to the railroad station in charge of a guard and consigned the grinning Blinky to the cell that had long been his home. On returning to the office the secretary said: "I've brought Valentine along too. I thought you might want him to open the safe."

A disturbed expression came into the prison master's face. He glanced quickly at Fay and his niece, then talked in an undertone with his aid. He was interrupted by Mrs. Webster.

"The two you have shown us do not entirely prove your argument, Mr. Warden," she said doubtfully. "They are the very lowest types in the prison. You argue a general premise from two individual cases. We do not maintain that such apparent criminals as we have seen should be liberated, but—she turned to Fay—"there are gentlemen here, governor, men of quite a different type than these, whom one never sees."

"Warden," said the lieutenant governor, "I fear the ladies have more interest in the more romantic types of criminals—poets, for instance."

Mrs. Moore rose indignantly. "I shall make note of that frivolous speech in my report," she snapped.

Handler thought of Valentine, who was being detained outside. He would



BLINKY DAVIS RAISED THE CHECK TO \$50,000.

give his visitors their wish, as Fay seemed greatly interested. He would show them his prize exhibit. In spite of a belief that was taking a strong hold on his brain he would take a chance on displaying the unique abilities of No. 1288.

He well knew what to do should complications ensue. There were dark cells in Sing Sing for convicts the warden could decide to be unkind. These were damp, dark cells below the level of the rushing river, relics of years when the state had little money and little thought for those held to have broken its laws. There

tered the room the lieutenant governor had noticed that the convict walked with a free, manly stride, having no assistance to the shuffling prison slouch of his fellow inmates.

"Permit me," Handler addressed his visitors, with an elaborate gesture.



"DICK THE RAT."

"To present Mr. Jimmy Valentine. He's put more time locks on the reformed list than any three men in the whole place, and when it comes to the fancy 'gotaway' only a cross-eyed copper can keep tabs on him."

The warden's picturesque introduction was lost on Rose Lane. She caught a glimpse of the face of the man in felon's stripes. She leaned to one side to make certain. Yes; now she could not possibly be mistaken. She extended her hand spasmodically and clutched the lieutenant governor's arm.

"Uncle, uncle," she said chokingly, "it is he!"

"What's the matter, child?" was Fay's anxious response.

"That is the man who saved me!" the excited young girl gasped. "That is the man who threw the burglar through the express train window!"

The warden's shifting eye caught the agitated movement of Rose Lane as Jimmy Valentine was brought in, and he quickly resolved on a course of procedure that would place the young prisoner in as bad a light as possible. As for the lieutenant governor, he was almost as astonished as Rose at the unexpected denouement, and he quietly insisted that she say nothing more about the subject and calm herself. So far as outward manifestations were concerned, the girl followed this advice fairly well, but her heart pounded uncontrollably, her pulse throbbled correspondingly, and a wave of deepest pity surged over her as she realized the horrible lot to which had been condemned the hero of the one great adventure of her life, the gallant Prince Charming of the only romance in which she had ever played a part.

The lieutenant governor addressed the prisoner:

"How do you do, sir?"

Valentine swung around and faced the speaker. He realized that he could no longer conceal his features from the spectator. He pressed his hands nervously together and looked at the questioner squarely in the eyes.

"How do you do, sir?" he said in a low voice.

Handler was watching the exchange of greetings with keen interest.

"Met before, governor, have you?" he asked ingenuously.

"No," responded Fay. "But I'm glad to see you have some types here different than 'Dick the Rat' and—"

"Yes," broke in the warden. "Here, Jimmy, there's something gone wrong with the office safe. Open it for me, will you?"

Fay fastened a penetrating gaze on Valentine.

The prisoner turned his face away and toward the warden.

"I'll do so very gladly if I can. What is the combination?"

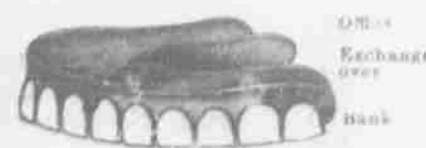
"Combination?" exploded the warden, staring at the prisoner.

Valentine was as cool and as insistent as though he were an employer talking with one of his clerks.

"Yes, the combination. How can you expect me to open the safe without it? Why, Mr. Warden, you must be joking with me."

(To be Continued)

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